



## *Taxus baccata* English Yew<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

English Yew is most easily recognized in its trimmed form as dense hedges and screens, or shaped into topiary, but this dark green evergreen makes an outstanding specimen (Fig. 1). If left to grow naturally, it reaches 20 to 25 feet in height with a spread of 15 to 20 feet in most situations. Plants grow slowly and have been known to reach heights of 50 feet. The shiny, very dark green leaves are 0.5 to 1.5 inches long. The attractive, reddish-brown trunk is often fluted and can become quite massive. The inconspicuous flowers appear in spring and are followed by the production of small, showy, red, fleshy fruits which contain one of the most poisonous seeds known, capable of poisoning both man and livestock. Taxine, the toxic chemical, is found in the leaves, bark, and hard part of the seed.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Taxus baccata*

**Pronunciation:** TACK-sus back-AY-tuh

**Common name(s):** English Yew

**Family:** *Taxaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5B through 7 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** Bonsai; hedge; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; specimen; Christmas tree; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

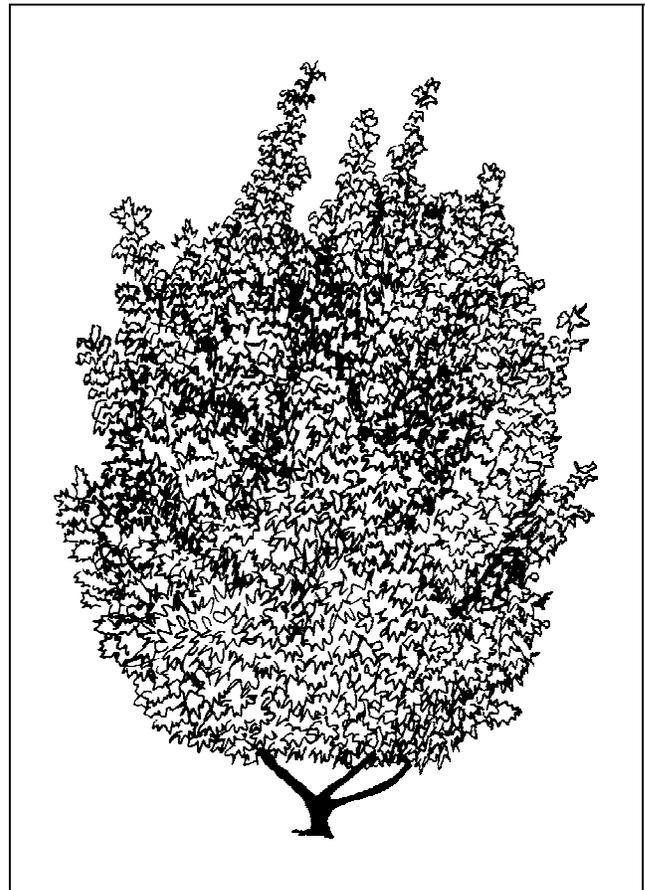


Figure 1. Middle-aged English Yew.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 20 to 25 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more

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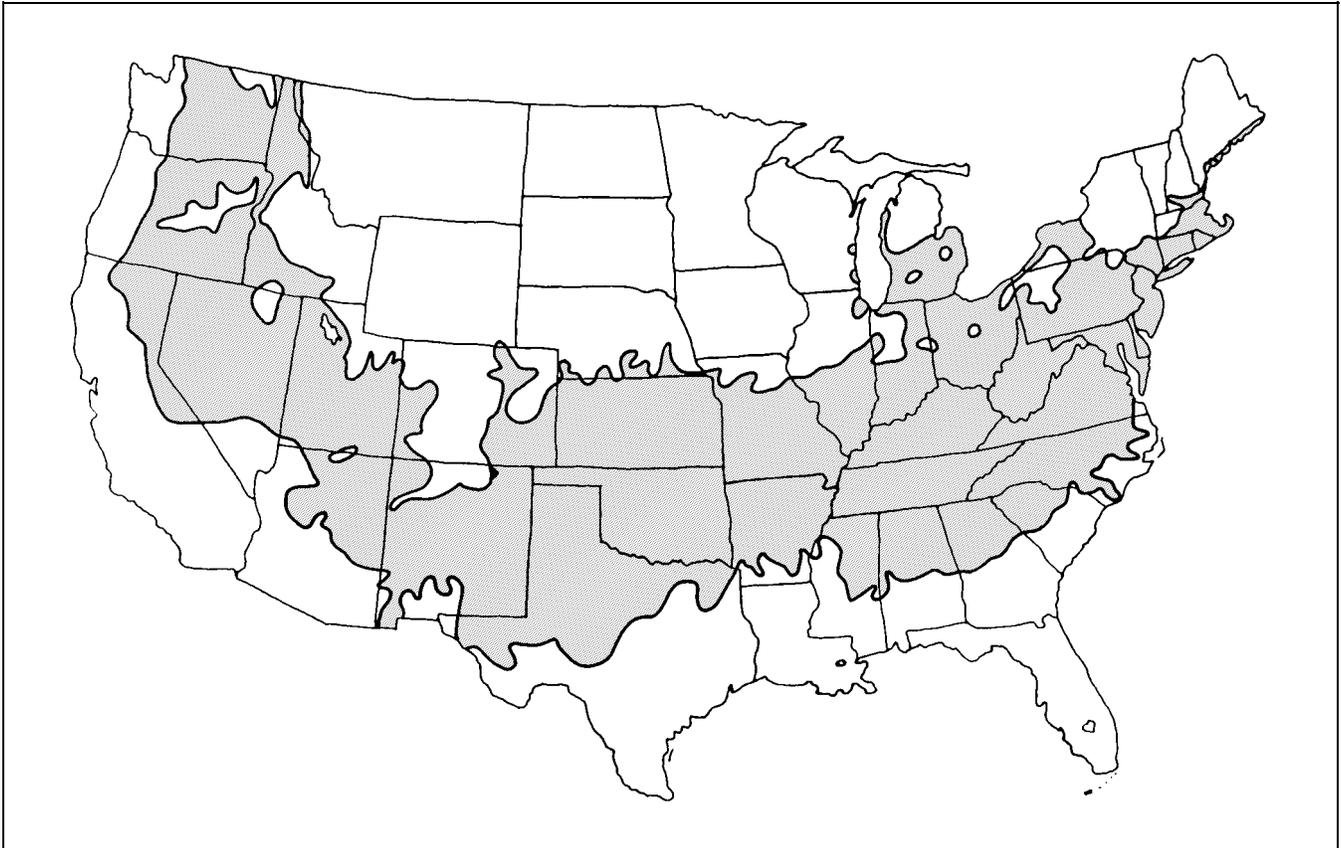


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** linear

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see; parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen; needle leaf evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** green; yellow

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; very showy trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

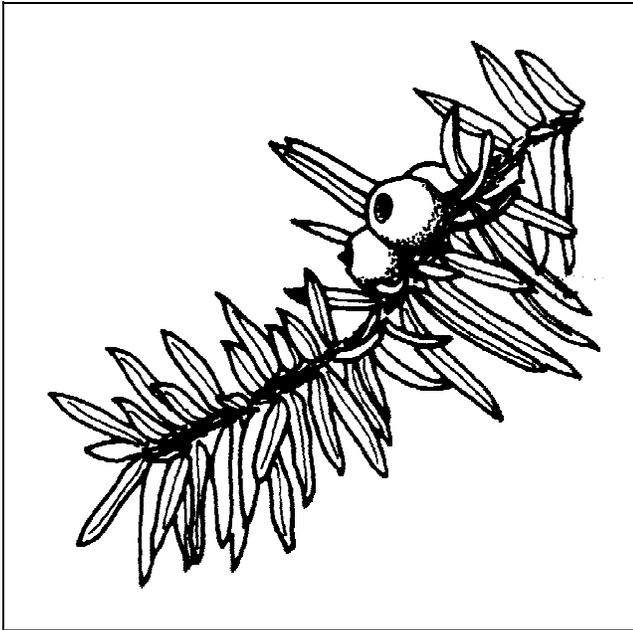


Figure 3. Foliage of English Yew.

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;  
tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline;  
acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Ozone sensitivity:** tolerant

**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests  
or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Yew is used in the tree form primarily to create a screen, to develop into a topiary or to plant as a large clipped specimen on a large estate or other large landscape. The dense crown makes it especially suited for a screen provided plants are located in full-day sun and they are given plenty of room to spread. If lateral space is limited, select one of the narrow, upright cultivars.

English Yew should be grown in full sun on well-drained, moist soil, acid or alkaline.

Propagation is by seeds (with difficulty), cuttings, or grafting.

### Pests

*Taxus* mealybug, black vine weevil, *Taxus* scale, and yew-gall midge can cause some damage.

### Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.